

STEM CELLS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, at 12 o'clock today, President Obama brought new hope to millions of Americans who suffer from afflictions that one day might be cured. President Obama's executive order finally overturns the Bush administration's flawed policy on stem cells and restores scientific integrity to our law and our policy.

President Obama's executive order puts science above ideology and honors the strong wishes of hundreds of leading medical and scientific associations, research universities, patient advocacy groups, and, most importantly, the American people.

Since 2001, our most promising scientists have been forced to work literally with one hand tied behind their back. The President's action today sends a message to the millions who suffer that help—and hope—are on the way.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Oh, I see my friend here.

Mr. REID, through the Chair I ask my friend from South Carolina, are you ready to take the floor?

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL READING MONTH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 69.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 69) designating March 2009 as "National Reading Month" and authorizing the collection of nonmonetary book donations in Senate office buildings during the period beginning March 9, 2009 and ending March 27, 2009 from Senators and officers and employees of the Senate to assist elementary school students in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid on the table, there be no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to this matter be printed in the RECORD.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 69) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 69

Whereas literacy is a learned skill that is improved through practice and regular reading;

Whereas public and school libraries play an important role in helping children learn to read and gain critical information literacy skills by providing easy and free access to books and other information on a wide range of topics;

Whereas the reading of books with children improves children's language, cognitive, and literacy skills;

Whereas research demonstrates that reading aloud with children is the single most important activity for helping them become successful readers;

Whereas quality children's books and the continued efforts of educators, parents, and volunteer reading partners can instill a love of reading that will last a lifetime;

Whereas school reading programs provide students with a chance to improve their reading skills and take pleasure in stories;

Whereas such programs have a profound and lasting positive impact on a child's life through improved reading comprehension, motivation, and achievement, as well as improved overall academic performance, classroom behavior, self-confidence, and social skills; and

Whereas all people of the United States can help celebrate the importance of reading by donating children's books, volunteering to read to and mentor young students, and supporting public policies aimed at improving literacy rates: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, Notwithstanding any other rules and regulations of the Senate—

(1) the Senate designates March 2009 as "National Reading Month";

(2) a Senator or officer or employee of the Senate may solicit another Senator or officer or employee of the Senate within Senate buildings for nonmonetary book donations during the period beginning March 9, 2009 and ending March 27, 2009 to assist elementary school students in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, if such solicitation does not otherwise violate any rule or regulation of the Senate or any Federal law; and

(3) a Senator or officer or employee of the Senate may work with a nonprofit organization with respect to the delivery of donations described in paragraph (2).

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS ACT,
2009

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1105, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1105) making omnibus appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2009, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Ensign amendment No. 615, to strike the restrictions on the District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program.

Kyl amendment No. 631, to require the Secretary of State to certify that funds made

available for reconstruction efforts in Gaza will not be diverted to Hamas or entities controlled by Hamas.

Kyl amendment No. 629, to provide that no funds may be used to resettle Palestinians from Gaza into the United States.

Kyl amendment No. 630, to require a report on countermuggling efforts in Gaza.

McCain amendment No. 593, to prohibit the use of certain funds provided in the bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, everyone is well aware our country is going through some serious tribulation economically. The whole world, in fact, is dealing with serious economic troubles.

There are signs of hope in many areas of our economy. I think it is important for us, particularly those of us in elected office, to recognize those good things, and that the strength of the American people will certainly pull us out of this hole, as they have many times in the past.

Hopefully, what we do here in Washington will help and not hurt. I think everyone is aware a large part of our recession is the banking and credit problem. Certainly, if it did not cause it, it made it much worse, and continues to today.

Unfortunately, the new administration and the Congress have not put forth any plan to fix our credit crisis, to make our banks work appropriately. While many of them are calling me to remind me they are loaning money, they are working, there is still a lot we need to do in the credit area that we have not fixed.

Unfortunately, the trillion-dollar so-called stimulus plan we passed only a couple weeks ago—all borrowed money—did not address the credit/banking problem. It addressed issues that had nothing to do with the recession. The stimulus provided a lot of additional funds for education, health care, and infrastructure—a lot of good things. But those things did not cause our recession, and they are certainly not going to get us out of it.

I think the failure to bring forth a plan that addresses the real causes of the recession has many people around the country wondering what we are thinking. The fact is, what we are thinking is about the next election and not the next generation. It has become clear we are not addressing the real causes of the problems but are doing things that are more politically beneficial than beneficial to our economy.

As we deal with the difficult economic situation, it is almost hard to see the White House going in a lot of different directions, and some that are especially painful, particularly the issue of life. The new President campaigned on reducing the number of abortions, but in the first month or 6 weeks of his Presidency, he has changed the rule where now the American taxpayer is funding abortions all around the world. They put forth an Executive order to strike the conscience clause, which means we are